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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: Taiwan Strait Security in U.S.-
JAPAN SECURITY PACT

1. Summary: The Taipei dailies gave significant reporting and editorial coverage February 19 - 21 to a joint statement issued by the United States and Japan in Washington Saturday, reporting that the two allies had for the first time included easing tensions in the Taiwan Strait as part of their 'common strategic objectives.' Coverage was based Saturday on a Washington Post story and Sunday and Monday on the joint press conference and Secretary Rice's press appearance with the Dutch foreign minister. Editorials of all the major newspapers in Taiwan welcomed the move, saying it reflected the change in the balance of power in East Asia. End Summary.

2. Front page headlines and numerous additional reports prominently located on inside pages of all dailies proclaimed that Japan and the United States had undertaken an unprecedented step by identifying peace in the Taiwan Strait as one of their common regional security interests. The largest Taiwan daily, the pro-independence Liberty Times, said (2/19) that this meant that Washington and Tokyo had adjusted their larger strategy and would not sit idly by if China used military force against Taiwan. A page two headline reported that President Chen had called on Taiwan, the U.S. and Japan to jointly oppose China's threat. A page one banner headline in the pro-independence Taiwan Daily (2/20) read: "Rice Warns China not to change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait." The sub-headline adds: "To protect peace in the Asia Pacific Region is the U.S. and Japan's common objective. She hopes that the two nations will strive together to restrain China from military action against Taiwan. A second story on page one of the Taiwan Daily is headlined "The U.S. and Japan oppose China's anti-secession law." The centrist China Times and pro-unification United Daily also provided extensive coverage Saturday through Monday emphasizing the U.S. and Japan commitment to Taiwan's defense as part of their larger effort to counter China's growing military strength.

3. The pro-independence newspapers editorialized that the inclusion of cross-Strait security in joint statement at the conclusion of the U.S.-Japan security talks was aimed at curbing China's planned passage of the "anti-secession" law in early March. The "Taiwan Daily" editorial applauded the decision by the United States and Japan, and it then urged the Taiwan people to work together to enhance the island's self-defense capabilities by getting the NTD610.8 billion arms procurement package passed by the Legislative Yuan as early as possible.

4. Editorials in the pro-unification and pro-status quo newspapers, however, expressed a more reserved view toward this new development, saying that it does not indicate a change in the fundamental structure of the United States' and Japan's cross-Strait policies. The pro-unification, English-language "China Post" even cautioned the leaders in Taiwan not to get carried away into thinking that Taiwan can unilaterally change the status quo or that Tokyo and Washington would automatically rush to Taiwan's rescue should a war break out in the Taiwan Strait.

A) "Democratic Asia Is a Common Strategic Objective for the United States and Japan"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" commented in an editorial (2/21):

"February 19, the United States and Japan held a ministerial two-plus-two bilateral discussion in Washington, which was followed by the issuance of a joint statement. In the joint statement, [both allies] declared that it is the United States and Japan's common strategic objective to reduce tensions across the Taiwan Strait. The two countries indicated that Taiwan is a common security issue for the United States and Japan, and they hope to work with China to jointly

ensure peace in the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan did not make any particular moves lately and has been busy with issues such as reconciliation and co-existence inside the island. Evidently, the U.S.-Japan joint statement is thus aimed at China's 'anti-secession law. ...'

"... During the expansion process of China's hegemonic power, Taiwan is obviously its number one target, but countries like the United States and Japan cannot stay away from [such a development]. Any subtle change in the cross-Strait situation will affect the national interests of the United States and Japan. Given China's military expansion and the gradual strengthening of the U.S.-Japan security system, the Taiwan Strait has been included ... and clearly acknowledged as a strategic objective [by Washington and Tokyo]. Such a development is naturally a result of China's constant provocative moves. ...

"The U.S.-Japan joint statement, which indicated that the two countries' common strategic objective is to reduce cross-Strait tensions, showed a clear intention to protect democratic Taiwan. But we need to ask ourselves first: What is Taiwan's strategic objective then? Is it to make more money in China or to wait to be annexed? None of the above. Only by insisting on our national sovereignty, strengthening our economic independence and democratic self-determination can Taiwan become a normal country. Only by doing so can Taiwan's strategic objective be closely linked to those of the United States' and Japan's, and a democratic partnership of the 21st century be established. In that way [Taiwan, the United States and Japan] can work together to promote democratic values in the Asia-Pacific region and thereby thoroughly eliminate the element of uncertainty in the Taiwan Strait."

B) "U.S.-Japan Security Pact Expands to Cover the Taiwan Strait; All Taiwan People Should Work Together to Help Themselves; Taiwan's Indecisiveness Regarding the Major Arms Procurement Budget Might Offer China an Opportunity to Attack [the Island]; the United States and Japan Are Also Seriously Concerned about the Military Imbalance across the Taiwan Strait"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" editorialized (2/20):

"... The United States and Japan agreed [in their joint statement] that, whenever necessary, they will use military force to stop China from invading Taiwan. We believe that all Taiwan people should support and thank the two countries for their chivalrous deed. In the meantime, we should work together to help ourselves. ... Taiwan should strength the anti-submarine combat communications with the United States and Japan. It is a pity that the NTD610.8 billion arms procurement budget is still boycotted by the Pan-Blue legislators. [We] believe no one is opposed to Taiwan's strengthening of its self-defense capabilities; after all, we cannot totally rely on or expect the assistance from the United States and Japan. Given the great gap in military strength between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and the fact that Taiwan does not have preventive or deterrent self-defense military capabilities, we cannot be sure whether Beijing will take advantage of such an opportunity to invade the island. We hope those political parties, groups or people that are against the arms procurement packages will look at the big picture, or they will be suspected as spokespersons for the warmonger China."

C) "China Must Not Be Appeased"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" noted in an editorial (2/20):

"... We applaud the decision by both of the US and Japan to discard their wishy-washy political stance and clearly express their concern about security across the Taiwan Strait and in Asia. Neither country will now back off in the face of China's growing military capability. We believe that a preventive measure like this one taken by the US and Japan is truly wise. Otherwise, we may see a repeat of what happened with the former Iraqi regime, when after years of appeasing a dictator, the world was forced to respond militarily when Saddam Hussein rolled his tanks into neighboring Kuwait. ...

"We are delighted to see that the US and Japan have acted decisively on the issue of regional security and have made their determination to maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait clear to Beijing. Previous hesitation and lack of clarity in the policies of both countries has given little incentive for Beijing to restrain

itself, for it gave the impression of timidity and appeasement.

"With the National People's Congress scheduled to open on March 5, the passage of the 'anti-secession' law will make unilateral changes to the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. The US and Japan therefore have no choice but to harden their attitude and make security in the Strait a 'common strategic objective.' Only in this way can they prevent rash action by Beijing, and gradually stabilize an increasingly volatile situation."

D) "'Cross-Strait Stability' Is a Common Strategic Objective for the United States and Japan"
The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" editorialized (2/21):

"... The unusual move by the United States and Japan [to acknowledge that easing tensions in the Taiwan Strait was part of their 'common strategic objectives'] was of course related to the recent developments in the region: First, China's increasing military buildup has posed a substantive threat to the United States and Japan. ... Second, even though Tokyo and Beijing have shared an intimate relationship in economics and trade over the past few years, political tensions have escalated between the two countries. ... Based on Washington's commitment to Taiwan's security and the inseparable security relations between the United States and Japan, Tokyo assumes that it will surely be involved should a war break out in the Taiwan Strait in the future. Japan has thus attached greater importance to stability across the Taiwan Strait. Third, since President George W. Bush assumed office, anti-terrorism and war in Iraq have dominated Washington's foreign policy, but the United States still maintains a prudent and vigilant attitude toward Beijing. Washington will not allow any Asian-Pacific country to emerge to challenge the United States' hegemonic power. Beijing remains the hypothetical enemy that the United States watches most closely and the Taiwan Strait is in particular an area that will most easily lead to conflicts between Beijing and Washington. ...

"... In the joint statement [issued by the United States and Japan Saturday], it did not say that the two allies would fight against the rising China, nor did it mention that they would fight against China for Taiwan. This is a point that everyone [here] should keep in mind. Prior to the press conference on the U.S.-Japan Security Committee Statement, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice joined a press conference with her Dutch counterpart, in which she emphasized that 'we have cautiously reminded each party involved that they should not attempt to unilaterally change the status quo [in the Taiwan Strait]. This means that China should not attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo, neither should Taiwan attempt to do so.' Even though some people attempted to interpret Rice's remarks between the lines, the United States' cross-Strait policy still remains balanced at the current stage. It did not tilt toward Taiwan, so Taiwan should not engage in wishful thinking and believe that the United States and Japan will integrate Taiwan into their defense area. There is also no need for Taiwan to test the United States' bottom line.

"International politics are practical and ruthless. The Taiwan Strait can be included in the [U.S.-Japan security pact], so can it also be deleted. If rulers of the United States and Japan change to somebody else, [no one can be sure] whether the current policy will remain the same, or chances are that [the current policy might be changed so that] both the United States and Japan will jointly work the Taiwan issue. All such developments are surely not what Taiwan would be happy to see."

E) "Why Do the United States and Japan Show Concern about the Taiwan Strait?"

The conservative, pro-unification "United Daily News" observed in the "Black and White" column (2/21):

"The U.S.-Japan Security Committee Statement listed security across the Taiwan Strait as part of the two allies' common strategic objectives. This development basically reflects two facts: First, China's recent emergence has dismayed both the United States and Japan; the United States has thus successfully talked Japan into joining itself in conducting a certain form of containment [against China]. Second, tensions have often escalated across the Taiwan Strait over the past few years given the frequent political manipulations by Beijing and Taipei. In an attempt to prevent the

escalating conflicts [across the Taiwan Strait] to affect regional stability, both the United States and Japan felt the need to express their concerns in public.

"As a result, it will be undoubtedly erroneous if people seek to comment on or analyze the U.S.-Japan security deployment from Taiwan's perspective only because they will certainly miss the big picture of Washington's and Tokyo's own strategic interests. ...

"In addition to the cross-Strait issue and the wrestling between China and Japan in the East China Sea, a bigger crisis in East Asia nowadays comes from the threats of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons. [We] can say that the situation in Northeastern Asia is more of a headache for the United States and Japan than the cross-Strait situation. To resolve the North Korea problem, Beijing's mediation is a must. In other words, even though Beijing is obviously a common strategic objective for the United States and Japan with regard to the cross-Strait issue, Beijing nonetheless shares strategic partnership with both the United States and Japan when it comes to the Korean Peninsula issue. When compared with [Pyongyang], Taiwan seems to be in a less powerful strategic role [in the region].

"[We] must not forget that the source of the cross-Strait crisis does not come from Beijing's enactment of the anti-secession law; instead it is a result of constant confrontations and provocation by both sides of the Taiwan Strait over many years. [Let's] just imagine: how could there have been a draft anti-secession bill if President Chen Shui-bian had not announced his plan to hold a referendum on Taiwan's new constitution? Why would Taiwan need to spend a huge amount of NTD610.8 billion in arming itself if Beijing had not deployed hundreds of missiles aimed at Taiwan? ..."

F) "Assistance from Japan, U.S. Not To Be Taken for Granted"

The conservative, pro-independence, English-language "China Post" said in an editorial (2/20):

"... But while we are pleased to see Japan and the United States offer a clearer assessment of what they might do in the event of a war in the Taiwan Strait, we are concerned that leaders here might get carried away into thinking Tokyo and Washington would automatically rush to our defense.

"The situation is reminiscent of early on in the first term of U.S. President George W. Bush, who publicly stated his administration would do 'whatever it took' to defend Taiwan against attack from mainland China.

"President Bush later watered down his remarks after the international press, as well as pro-independence activists here in Taiwan, interpreted them to give a green light to a change in the status quo. ...

"Still, our government should be careful not to interpret Japan's growing boldness toward mainland China as a license for us to change the status quo. If our leaders provoke Beijing into taking military action, such as by scrapping our status as the Republic of China, we would not be surprised if Tokyo and perhaps even Washington declined to give us anything more than moral support.

"But if we mind our affairs well and refrain from publicly gloating about this major change in the U.S.-Japan security relationship, we can and should expect to see our prudence rewarded by Tokyo and Washington by even clearer assurances in the future. ..."

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